

## Presentation to the Commission for Children and Families

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### Early Care and Education Rates are Low for Abused and Neglected Children in LA County

A conservative estimate of **12.8% or 1,509** of the DCFS caseload under age five attended public early care and education programs, including Head Start/Early Head Start and subsidized child care/preschool, in 2011.




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A majority of families known to LA DCFS have been or are also receiving CalWORKS

60-87%, according to estimates of overlapping caseloads

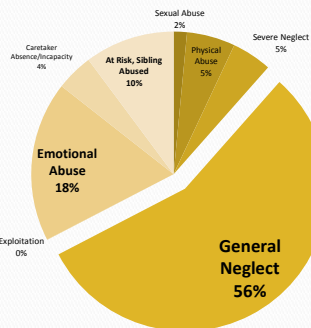
Vulnerable families

- Health & mental health challenges
- Financial insecurity & low formal education
- Unsafe neighborhoods

**“These kids are mostly hungry and dirty...”**

Erwin McEwen, Former Director of Illinois Dept. of Children & Family Services

Substantiated Allegation Type  
Children <5 Years, Jan. 2011-Dec. 2011




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## Children At-Risk – but for what?

- Developmental delays
- Poor academic success
- Socioemotional competencies & well-being
- Negative life outcomes, including delinquency/criminal behavior, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, homelessness.

*This is true for children from low-income families and disadvantaged communities, generally. It is especially true of children known to child welfare, given the high likelihood of overlapping and cumulative impact of known risk factors.*




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## A life disrupted – children in care

- Upon removal, children have additional traumas layered onto environmental and familial risk.
  - Maltreatment
- Further disruption of early attachment with a caregiver
- Environmental instability




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## The effects of toxic stress are most apparent in children under five known to child welfare.

- Five times more likely to have developmental delays
  - Up to 50% of children known to child welfare agencies
- Basic skills beget more skills
- Lack of dynamic “serve & return” relationships with adults that enhance early learning

*The children known to child welfare agencies are an easily identifiable population who could most benefit from early intervention and support services, such as high-quality early care and education.*




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**High quality early learning experiences can positively alter a child's life course, contribute to family stability, and reduce public assistance and intervention costs.**

- ▶ **Safety** - Observing and responding to early warning signs of child abuse or neglect, or other child-related risk factors for abuse such as developmental delays, socioemotional and behavioral issues, and health issues, in addition to parent or caregiver respite.




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**High quality early learning experiences can positively alter a child's life course, contribute to family stability, and reduce public assistance and intervention costs.**

- ▶ **Permanency** – Provide stable, caring access points for children and parents/caregivers to child and family support services from local community based organizations without the traditional stigma of child welfare.




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**High quality early learning experiences can positively alter a child's life course, contribute to family stability, and reduce public assistance and intervention costs.**

- ▶ **Well-being** – Promoting the socioemotional development and school readiness of children most at-risk for academic delays and poor psychosocial development, and providing and facilitating stable and responsive relationships with caring adults (teachers, service providers, parents, caregivers, etc.)




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### Early Care and Education Rates are Low for LA's Maltreated Children

- ▶ **12.8% (1,509)** of the DCFS caseload under age five, 11,778 as of October 2011, attended public early care and education programs, including Head Start/Early Head Start and subsidized child care/preschool




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### Early Care and Education Rates are Low for LA's Maltreated Children

- ▶ **2.13%** of children receiving state subsidized services in LA County did so because they are receiving protective services (October 2011).

*In contrast, about 20% of infants and toddlers and about 50% of 3 & 4 year-olds from LA County's low-income families are able to access subsidized child care and development services.*




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### Early Care and Education Rates are Low for LA's Maltreated Children

- ▶ **131** children were served outside of DCFS's state-contracted child care voucher program in October 2011.

- *48,944 children under 5 years old were served overall in LA county through state subsidies*




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## Many policy and practice barriers stand in the way of full access.

- Education/developmental needs not consistently assessed by child welfare agencies
- Families may be accessing informal or income-based child care and development services that are not specifically tracking abused/neglected children
- Mixed delivery system that results in conflicting and confusing eligibility determination processes across Federal and State-subsidized programs for abused/neglected children
- Program quality variability and the overall shortage of high-quality early learning spaces in California




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## Policy Priority 1

All maltreated and significantly at-risk children under child welfare supervision should be identified and referred by child welfare workers and given enrollment priority in high quality public ECE programs.

*Policies that achieve this will align with safety and permanency efforts by providing respite and workforce support to parents and caregivers, and will promote child well-being by addressing the significant developmental risks.*




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## Policy Priority 2

Scale up best-practices (including Head Start/Early Head Start partnership/referral models) through policies that remove barriers to collaboration and coordination between early care and education systems and child welfare systems.

*This will promote consistency of care and ultimately enhance efforts ensure safe, stable environments for children and align education policies for young children in care with policies for school-age children.*




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### Policy Priority 3

Build high-quality and integrated ECE systems, which meet the dual goals of prevention and early intervention, by working in tandem with child welfare agencies to ensure the safety, permanency, and the well-being of all young children at-risk while enrolled in ECE and beyond.

*Systems which bring into alignment policies and practices with other social services, including public health, mental health, financial assistance, and education, with child welfare, will enhance the quality of ECE services and promote a seamless early environment for the most vulnerable children.*



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